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DE RUEHBUL #0299 0300932

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5767
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 3577
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS KABUL 000299

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR SCA/FO GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CT, SCA/PPD
NSC FOR HARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS ON KARZAI'S ASHURA MESSAGE

¶1. (SBU) As is the usual custom on religious holidays, President Karzai offered a message during the Ashura ceremony at the Takyakhana-e-Husseenia (Shiite Mosque) on January 29. It follows successful efforts by government and religious leaders and security forces to plan for a peaceful Ashura celebration which highlighted reconciliation rather than sectarian differences. While some international press reports stated that Karzai's statement included an offer to negotiate with the Taliban, he did not in fact mention the Taliban. Negotiations were offered as a possibility -- linked to reconciliation.

¶2. (SBU) Karzai did not use a prepared text, but there is a transcript of his remarks, which were given in Dari. While there are several variations on the English translation, the one which Embassy interpreters believe is closest to the message is "while we are fighting for our honor against the enemy who seeks our annihilation and who is shedding our blood, we yet again open the paths of reconciliation and negotiation." Another translation is "while we are fighting for our honor, we still open the door for reconciliation and negotiations with our enemy who is after our destruction and shedding our blood." There have been several translations, and the resulting English is not precise, but our interpreters are confident the message was understood by Afghans as an invitation highlighting reconciliation as the basis for negotiations.

¶3. (SBU) The message is also consistent with those offered by Karzai on previous holidays, including Eid in October, where he reiterated his invitation to Mullah Omar to accept the offer of reconciliation. Those remarks were also misreported or misinterpreted by some as an offer to negotiate with Mullah Omar.

NORLAND